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To: County Council – 19 July 2012

Subject: Kent Safeguarding Children Board – 2011/12 Annual Report

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This attached annual report from Kent Safeguarding Children Board describes the progress made in improving the safeguarding services provided to Kent's children and young people over 2011/12, and outlines the challenges ahead over the next year.

Recommendation: County Council is asked to COMMENT on the progress made and NOTE the 2011/12 Annual Report attached.

1. Introduction

- (1) This report presents the 2011/12 Annual Report produced and agreed by Kent Safeguarding Children Board. Current Government guidance captured in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) sets out the requirement introduced through The Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2006 for Local Safeguarding Children Boards to produce and publish an annual report. This report should provide an assessment of the effectiveness of local arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, set against a comprehensive analysis of the local area safeguarding context.
- (2) The annual report should also demonstrate the extent to which the functions of the Local Safeguarding Children Board are being effectively discharged, including an assessment of policies and procedures to keep children safe.
- (3) In the proposed revisions to Working Together recently issued by the Department for Education for consultation (June 2012) it is recommended that once the report is published it should be submitted to the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council, the local Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

2. The 2011/12 Annual Report

- (1) The report details good progress with key performance indicators in relation to caseloads, inappropriate referrals and the number of children with child protection plans all reducing. They are now below average compared to Kent's statistical neighbours. This is very different to eighteen months ago.
- (2) As the report indicates although there is improvement in the quality of information being shared by practitioners across different sectors such as social work, policing, schools and health care, there is still some way to go in ensuring that all children get the right help at the right time and there is a common understanding of thresholds across the child protection partnership.
- (3) There has been significant progress over the last 12 months in consolidating the safeguarding partnership, through three key areas – clarifying governance arrangements; ensuring all professionals working with children have clear information on thresholds, eligibility and assessment processes for child protection support; and the development of a new quality assurance framework. This means Kent Safeguarding Children Board is better placed to know what works well in protecting children in the County and the areas that still need improving.
- (3) Specific challenges are highlighted around action taken to learn lessons from cases when things go wrong and where children are the subject of neglect, harm or abuse from their carers or other adults around them. Kent agencies are committed to transparency and openness in publically sharing the recommendations arising from Serious Case Reviews and the progress against actions taken. KSCB will require assurance from all Kent agencies that actions following SCRs are properly monitored and progress evidenced.
- (4) Additionally, the work of supporting Kent's 1,804 looked after children (including 186 unaccompanied asylum seeking children), as well as the 1,248 looked after children placed by other local authorities in the county, is placing massive pressures on public agencies responsible for supporting vulnerable children in Kent, including children's social services, schools, police, and health services. KSCB will require evidence that Kent agencies are adequately able to care for all children placed in certain areas such as Thanet.

3. Conclusions

- (1) The national Munro Review completed in 2011 provides a new focus on child protection. Professor Munro has provided her own analysis of how swiftly improvements are happening. Kent agencies have worked hard over the past year to address key failings in protecting children across the County.
- (2) However, when drilling down into the detail, it is clear that Kent Safeguarding Children Board must continue to improve its own quality assurance of Kent agencies and be confident to provide challenge, when

action is not taken swiftly to protect children. Further improvement is needed to really know how good Kent is in protecting the most vulnerable children across the entire county.

4. Recommendations

- (1) County Council is asked to:
 - (a) COMMENT on the progress and improvements made during 2011/12, as detailed in the Annual Report from Kent Safeguarding Children Board
 - (b) NOTE the 2011/12 Annual Report attached

5. Background Documents

None

6. Contact details

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